

Oak Street
UNCLASSIFIED

In Memoriam.

Dirck C. Lansing, D. D.


1785-1857.

My dear Miss

With love and Christmas greetings.

Yours truly
John

1885.



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IN MEMORIAM.

DIRCK C. LANSING, D. D.

Born at Lansingburgh, N. Y., March 3d, 1785.

Died at Cincinnati, Ohio, March 19th, 1857.

AUBURN, N. Y.,
PRESS OF KNAPP, PECK & THOMSON.
1883.

IN MEMORIAM.

The following Memorial services were held in Calvary Presbyterian Church, Auburn, New York, on Sabbath morning, September 23d, 1883. The occasion was furnished by the gift to the Church of a new Communion table,* and the services were as usual, until the time for the sermon arrived, when the pastor, the Rev. George B. Stewart, stated that it had been an open secret for some weeks that the church was to receive this gift.

“It is presented as a Memorial of her father, the Rev. Dirck C. Lansing, D. D., by his daughter.

*The table is two feet four inches wide, four feet eight inches long, and two feet nine inches high. It is made of black walnut with a red Tennessee marble top. It has three open arches in front and back and one in either end, with trefoils and heavy carving. It is a piece of genuine ecclesiastical work which might well be called Victorian Gothic. Just under the top moulding is carved, “This do in remembrance of me,” and on the lower crossbar “In memoriam.” On the moulding at the back is a neat silver plate with the inscription :

*“Presented to Calvary Church by Mrs. F. L. Griswold,
in memory of her father,
Rev. Dirck C. Lansing, D. D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church
from 1817 to 1829,
the first twelve years in the history of this house of worship.”*

“The first sermon that Dr. Lansing preached in Auburn was delivered in this house, which was then the First church, and it was the dedication sermon. The new church had just been completed when Dr. Lansing was called, in the fall of 1817, to be the pastor, and for twelve years these walls heard his ringing eloquence.

“This occasion affords a fitting opportunity for something to be said regarding Dr. Lansing and his connection with this church and I have invited Prof. Hopkins, than whom none other is better fitted, to deliver a short memorial address.”

ADDRESS BY PROF. S. M. HOPKINS.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts those disciples to keep in memory the faithful pastors who had, at an earlier period, preached to them the gospel. “Remember them that had the rule over you, which spake unto you the word of God, and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.” A faithful minister of Christ, an able and zealous preacher of His word, should not be quickly forgotten in the community where he labored. Such a man leaves a legacy of precious memories and precious influences behind him, of which the local church and congregation, at least, should recognize themselves as in some sort the heirs, and claim their share in the bequest. We are all of us—indeed, the best of us—and those who are better than the best of us, but as water spilled upon the ground that cannot be gathered up. The memory of us cannot long survive. But a good and honored servant of Christ, who preached the gospel with distinguished power and success, should certainly not be forgotten in the community where he lived and within the generation to which he belonged. It is not so long

since Dr. Lansing died — it was in 1857 — but that many still survive who knew him well ; and it is not so long since he preached the gospel, occasionally at least in this city, (down to 1838) but that there are a good many of our older citizens, and myself among them who easily recall his remarkable person and qualities in the pulpit. There is an influence by no means to be despised, connected with the permanence and identity of a Christian sanctuary. Where a great cathedral or a more humble church has stood for many years or even centuries, it enshrines and gathers unto itself a host of noble and holy associations. No one surely can stand in the castle-church where Luther thundered against the corruptions of the Papacy, or in the identical temple in which John Calvin spoke day after day, his great exercitations on the scriptures, or step into the pulpit where Richard Baxter or George Whitefield held forth the glories of the Saint's Rest, or the guilt and doom of an unbelieving world, without feeling the air resonant with sainted voices, and holy almost as the mount where Moses and Elias descended to talk with Jesus ; the stones of the wall cry out and the beams from the ceiling answer ; through the long-drawn aisles the echo of ancient psalmody faintly resounds and the pews seem filled with ghostly worshipers, whose bodies have long since mouldered in the church yard. In such sanctuaries we stand with bated breath and uncovered head, since even though now perhaps desecrated by superstitious rites, and an impure gospel, they have been for long generations past the house of God and the gate of heaven to countless Christian souls, have rung with the noblest eloquence, have satisfied the most saintly devotion, have stood as monuments and landmarks of the Christian church, while thrones and palaces have crumbled into dust.

Even in this new western world, where almost all sanctuaries like other public institutions are recent and modern, the influence of this association of sacred memories with plan and structure is by no means unfelt. A Christian church which has stood for a generation or two on this soil has witnessed scenes of pathos and of power which, we may well believe, have thrilled the invisible world, and left their impress deep on the moral and spiritual history of human society. Such is this sanctuary in which we here worship. In its substance and solid frame-work, as is well known to you, it belonged to the old First Church, until superseded on its original site by the present beautiful stone structure. It had gone through various removals and improvements down to that time. It had been cut in two in the middle and lengthened to meet the demands of the growing population. But it still retained its original substance and form—the proportions only being slightly changed. It was always the same old rigid New England “meeting-house;” the preacher was still obliged to climb to his perch, half way between the floor and ceiling, and Noah’s dove with the olive branch in his beak still hovered over his head. Such was the church that in the year 1869 was taken down, transported at the expense of Mr. James S. Seymour to this lot on which it now stands, also his gift, and here rebuilt with the same identical materials. This is the same church, therefore we may truly say, in which the series of noble pastors, and great evangelists whose services the First congregation enjoyed during a period of sixty years, held forth the word of life. It was within these walls that the saintly and venerable Orton pleaded with sinners to be reconciled to God. It was here that Finney with his awful logic, broke down and shattered to pieces every bulwark that unbelief and impenitence built

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In memoriam. Dirick C . Lansing, D.D.
(1785-1857)

Auburn, NY, Knapp, Peck & Thomson,
1883

up against the truth, and forced the stoutest hearted rebels to fall on their knees, and ask what they must do to be saved, and to our present purpose, it was these timbers that heard the commanding, awe-inspiring and pathetic eloquence, of one who in all the qualities of a faithful minister, and in all the attributes of a great pulpit orator was scarcely second to any man of his generation, the Rev. Dirck C. Lansing. If these walls could have absorbed like a perfected phonograph the discourses to which they echoed between 1817 and 1829, and often afterwards, and could give them out to us now, what a storm of impetuous argumentation, of tender pleading, of direct pungent appeal to the conscience, would reverberate like thunder peals along these aisles.

But to the phonograph, would have also to be added some curiously perfected photograph to set the man before us—the tall, slender, erect figure ; the swarthy complexion and coal black hair (afterward whitened by age,) the keen glance of the dark eye—the whole inspired with an air of lofty courage and self confidence, that made him dominate every congregation like a king of men—if all this could be reproduced, we should get some idea of what Dirck C. Lansing was in his prime. Men shrunk before the glance of that eye as if it were the lightning—before the pointing of his finger as if it were a bare sword. The memory of his eloquence still lingers in the hearts of some of the aged people in this and the adjoining counties, as of something that belonged to the age of the giants ; for I myself never enjoyed the opportunity of hearing him till he was considerably passed the time of his traditionary renown.

It was therefore eminently fit that if family affection guiding Christian liberality should contemplate such a gift to the church as a sacra-

mental altar for a memorial of him, this house should witness the ceremony and this congregation—the successors of those he preached to—should enjoy the benefit. Let it serve to fix in our minds and hearts the memory of a prince and a great man among the preachers of the gospel, of one who had a passion for preaching—who had a burning enthusiasm for the salvation of men, and whose labors “God was pleased to crown (I here quote the language of another) with sixty revivals of religion.”

What Dr. Lansing was to the Theological Seminary, of which he was one of the originators and warmest friends and in which, while pastor of the First Presbyterian church, he gave gratuitous instruction in sacred rhetoric for five years—what he was to the church at large, and to the nascent presbyterianism of western New York, it is not pertinent or possible for me here to mention. But as it will help you to understand and remember what Dr. Lansing was himself—how tender and conscientious as well as strong and commanding, you will allow me to mention a circumstance recorded by Mr. Finney as among his experiences in this place, and I will give it in Mr. Finney’s own words : “Soon after my arrival at Auburn,” he observes, “a circumstance occurred of so striking a character, that I must give a brief relation of it. My wife and myself were guests of Dr. Lansing, the pastor of the church. The church were much conformed to the world ; and were accused by the unconverted of being leaders in dress and fashion and worldliness. As usual I directed my preaching to secure the reformation of the church, and to get them into a revival state. One Sabbath I had preached as searchingly as I was able, to the church in regard to their attitude before the world. The word took deep hold of the people. At the close of

my address I called upon the Pastor as usual to pray. He was much impressed with the sermon, and instead of immediately engaging in prayer, he made a short but very earnest address to the church, confirming what I had said. At this moment, a man arose in the gallery, and said in a very deliberate and distinct manner, “ Mr. Lansing, I do not believe that such remarks from you can do any good while you wear a ruffled shirt and a gold ring, and while your wife and the ladies of your family sit as they do, before the congregation, dressed as leaders in the fashions of the day.”

It seemed as if this would kill Dr. Lansing outright. He made no reply ; but cast himself across the side of the pulpit and wept like a child. The congregation was almost as much shocked and affected as himself. They almost universally dropped their heads upon the seat in front of them, and many were weeping on every side. With the exception of the sobs and sighs, the house was profoundly silent. I waited a few moments ; and as Dr. Lansing did not move, I rose and offered a short prayer and dismissed the congregation.

I went home with the dear wounded Pastor, and when all the family were returned from church, he took off the ring—it was a slender gold ring that could hardly attract notice, and said his first wife when upon her dying bed, took it from her finger and placed it upon his, with the request that he should wear it for her sake. He had done so without a thought of its being a stumbling block to any soul. Of his ruffles, he had worn them from his childhood, and did not think of them as anything improper. But, he added, “ if these things are an occasion of offense to any, I will not wear them.” “ He was a precious Christian man (adds Mr. Finney) and an excellent Pastor.”

I do not quote this story as by any means sympathizing with that narrow and illiberal judging of others, which on this occasion caused such pain to Dr. Lansing, and yet not without a feeling that it may suggest some reflections profitable to all of us. A gold ring and a ruffle may be among the most innocent and suitable ornaments of the person of a minister, or any one else, and yet it may also be true that excessive worldliness and devotion to fashion among Christians, may justly scandalize unbelievers, and have something to do towards neutralizing the preaching of the Gospel. We all, of course, feel that in this matter Dr. Lansing was most innocent of any wrong doing ; and that the interruption was probably nothing more than the coarse insult of a fanatical or a pharisaical zealot.

It will add to the sympathy and kindness with which you will receive this gift from the daughter of Dr. Lansing, to reflect that these walls witnessed that pathetic scene ; that these timbers heard, so to say, the sobs of that tender-hearted conscientious Pastor, and his grieved congregation ; and that they resounded afterwards with the thanksgivings and praises of the multitudes who, in the revival that followed, had a “new song put into their mouths, even praise to our God.”

At the conclusion of Prof. Hopkins’s address, the pastor proceeded to consecrate the table to its holy use. His words were substantially as follows :

There are two inscriptions carved on this beautiful table. On the upper part, just under the top moulding, are the words, “This do in remembrance of me,” and on the lower cross-bar, “In memoriam.” Their meaning is the same, but their reference is different. The first indicates the use to which the table is to be put, the latter denotes the

motive of the gift. Our blessed Lord designed to perpetuate his memory, and so on the night in which he suffered he instituted with bread and wine, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As he blessed the simple elements and gave them to his disciples, he said, "This do in remembrance of me, for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till he come." His enemies, who a little after pierced those hands and shed that blood, little thought that that death by which they hoped to destroy him and his memory was to be the very means by which his memory was to be perpetuated. In the future as we sit around this table and partake of the emblems of Christ's love, we will be showing his death and keeping fresh the memory of his atonement.

It is fitting that this table as it stands before us from week to week should keep in memory the life and work of one of Christ's faithful disciples. He wrought well and lived nobly in this community, and his name ought to be reverently cherished. While it must remain forever and blessedly true that whatever of life the church has, whatever of power, whatever of usefulness, is due to Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord; yet it is also true that the church of Christ in Auburn owes much to the faithful, and successful labors of Dr. Lansing. Our Theological Seminary with whose early history he was so closely identified, which was known at one time as 'Lansing's folly,' now stands as a worthy and perpetual monument to his wisdom. The First church, the mother of all the churches of the place, whose first pastor he was in her first home, still gives in her vigorous strength and abounding good works testimony to the strong and substantial foundations which he laid here for the church of Christ. Under this dove, which spread

its wings above him during the twelve years of his ministry in this house, this table will stand to tell us and our successors of his devotion to his Master and his zeal in his service.

In the name of this church I accept with expressions of thankfulness this beautiful gift from the daughter of the departed saint, and in the name of the blessed Trinity, the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one God, I do now set apart and consecrate it to be used in his holy service. May God grant the memory of the just to continue until that Just One come, who has promised his waiting church, to come quickly.

The services were concluded with the following hymn :

Rise, O my soul ! pursue the path,
By ancient worthies trod ;
Aspiring, view those holy men,
Who lived and walked with God.

Though dead, they speak in reason's ear,
And in example live ;
Their faith, and hope, and mighty deeds,
Still fresh instruction give.

'T was through the Lamb's most precious blood,
They conquered every foe ;
And, to his power and matchless grace,
Their crowns and honors owe.

Lord ! may I ever keep in view
The patterns thou hast given
And ne'er forsake the blessed path
Which led them safe to heaven.

APPENDIX.

Extracts from Obituary Notices at the time of Dr. Lansing's death.

The venerable Dr. Lansing was called to his rest on Saturday last, the 19th, after a protracted and painful illness. He died at Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, where he had lately taken up his residence, and where, with his wonted fervor and activity, he was engaged in preaching the Gospel, and in abundant labors for the kingdom of Christ. His funeral was attended yesterday, at Troy, in the vicinity of which city he spent his youth upon his father's manor. Lansingburgh derived its name from his paternal grandfather, who was Patroon over a large tract of land in that neighborhood. In that village Dr. Lansing was born, in 1785. He entered Yale College at the age of fifteen, and graduated in 1804, and pursued his theological studies under Rev. Dr. Blachford, of his native town, using as text-books the then recent works of Hopkins, Bellamy and Edwards. It was this early and studious contact with the great thinkers of New England, that gave to him such clear and consistent views in theology; while the fervor of their spirit, so congenial to his own, animated that rare gift of popular eloquence with which he was endowed.

He entered upon his ministry in Onondaga, which was then a settlement of log-cabins in the wilderness. After eight years of successful labor, he removed to Stillwater, Saratoga County. In 1817, he was settled in Auburn, and for twenty years was a leading mind in the religious and educational movements of western New York. He was prominent as a preacher in the great revival period from 1825 to 1835, and was a chief agent in founding Auburn Seminary.

In this city, (N. Y.,) Dr. Lansing preached with great power and success in Masonic Hall, in Broadway, (lately demolished) where he gathered the church which worshiped, till recently, in Houston-st., and which gave birth to the Thirteenth-st. Presbyterian Church. He had also a brief but memorable ministry in Utica. Ill health drove him to Illinois ; but he resumed his labors in this city, some ten years ago, in a small church in Chrystie street, and presently removed to Clinton avenue, in Brooklyn, where, with a father's care, he nursed an infant church to maturity and strength. The project of building the elegant and spacious edifice now occupied by that church originated with him ; and it was urged on by him with a zeal and an enthusiasm worthy of his best days. The success of this undertaking he regarded as the crowning act and glory of his life. He left his sick chamber to lay its corner-stone, and on December 16th, 1855, he preached the sermon at the dedication of the house. He called this his "Coronation Day."

It is impossible, in these narrow limits, to do justice to his pure and noble character. His mental constitution exhibited a rare combination of the logical faculty, capable of severe analysis, and the imaginative, capable of lofty and even sublime reaches of spiritual vision. Hence he was at once clear and discriminating in his treatment of doctrine, and

glowing in his appeals to the heart and conscience. A child like sweetness of faith, and a most heavenly charity marked his life as a Christian. His heart never grew old ; nor did he ever lose the freshness and fervor of his early consecration to Christ. Sometimes, indeed, he seemed to live in an ecstacy of spiritual contemplation, and in prayer to enjoy the visible glory of the Redeemer. No one could associate with him and not feel that with him faith in Christ was a reality of the daily life, and that he was devoted with singleness of mind to the service of the Master. His tall, vigorous, muscular frame, fitted for endurance, became lithe under the power of his spiritual emotions or agile with the ardor of his labors for Christ. Our eye still greets that manly form, unbroken by the weight of years, as when last we saw him in the pulpit, and *will* not see him dead. And even when we assure ourselves that we shall no more see that countenance glowing with love and joy, we cannot mourn for him as dead. Rather do we take up in his name the psalm of Simeon, “ Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” A life all spent in active and useful service for Christ, a mind often illumined upon earth with the beatific vision of Christ, these were the prophecy and pledge of a life unfailing, and a vision undimmed, with Christ in His glory forever. As one hath said of Simeon : “ Nothing else remained for him, but that he should be let to *depart in peace*, and should lay him down in peace and take his rest ; that is, that they should bear him into the Jerusalem of eternal peace, and set him where he might contemplate that peace *which passeth all understanding*. Blessed old man ! thy youth is renewed like the eagles’ ; and thy desire is filled with good things.”

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